

LIFE SONNETS

THE FIRST VOLUME

A gift for
Christmas 1990

By

Marcel B. Matley

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Marcel B. Matley

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UPON SEPARATION FROM MY DAUGHTERS

Two children linger on the brink of mind;
Two laughs, two cries, four impulsive arms,
Whose bold affect and timid quick alarms
I find within my laugh, cry, arm - enshrined.

Two woefully empty spaces as millstones grind
To sorrow, night and day, the lonely charms
Which life apart in meager measure farms.
Not sighting them my eye believes it blind.

Yet such blindness is a bowl, such meal
The stuff of bread, such memory a yeast,
That solitude can change by baker-zeal.

While away, I have their gifts, not least
Of which the sadful thought for me they feel;
When here our love shall taste a richer meal.

January 14, 1977

PAM

I had no wing; I had no plane; I flew
 Though across the neighboring roof and sped
 Above the creeping line of light; I shed
My gravity by beauty of the view.

What bright delight, what wistful wand threw
 My careful thought afloat in space to tread
 An ebon whirl, enticing spell which led
To what mystic love? That view was you.

A Renaissance poet would himself devote
 By lifelong verse to a lady glimpsed at a door.
Such sight of you, how halting this meager note.

As your throat bejeweled the jewel you wore,
You lend, not gain, more grace to what I wrote.
Renew my view of you and grant much more.

February 22, 1977

SONNET TO THE ASSY LIBRARY PATRON

Come bring the splinter caught within your craw,
The unrequited effort of your day,
The injury for which you had to stay
Your anger and all the churning in your maw.

Whatever sufferance your ma and pa
Made you endure, the shame your betters lay
Upon your brow, the ill your foes may say,
Bring all with guilt your feel for every flaw.

Enough your silent crucifixion pain!
Enough your fruitless search for sweet relief!
More than enough the solace you can gain.

Here in the library act the tyrant chief;
On guileless heads your vengefulness can rain.
Rejoice! You made your hurt become our grief.

February 23, 1977

SONNET TO HER WHOM I WOULD LOVE

My blood knows of my hunger for you,
Pulsing with the message to all my parts.
The fierce urge to cry out to you darts
Sharply in and out me, through and through.

My night is darkened, deeper than purpled blue
To darkest dark, wherein your flavor starts
Me from dream, quick lost to my imaging arts.
A newer desire I learn than ever I knew.

The time trudges along, dull company
To tick my acheful longing; hope I hold
To hunger no more and quench your thirst for me.

In your smile I found my laughter, tolled
My sadness by your sigh, through love grew free.
Here, Love, bed we our want and to life's need wake bold.

June 1977

MAY YOU LOVE

Wait here, My Love, wait at the edge
Of my abyss. I ask not your dive
Into the terror of my private
Whirlpool, only that you wait with love

At the edge of my abyss. I dredge
The deadened body of memory, alive
With the compulsion of my private
Fear, the below which torments my above.

You patient love is forbearing me
To wreck the bitter barriers
Which block my fullest love to you.

This alone my trove to you:
I shall loose this soul which stirs
With love for you, love full and free.

September 5, 1977

A PETRARCHAN SONNET WRITTEN UPON READING
THE NEW SEXUAL ETHICS PROPOSED BY
THE CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

With liberated ladies you are in a jam

To be a classless cad who is crass in sex;

Take me for instance: a man with class in sex

Am I; a thoroughly Christian cad I am.

No seductive lies; no greedy flim nor flam;

No such thing as being brass in sex

As if the lass were good solely as in sex;

No selfish ego trips . . .

to bed . . .

a dame.

(continued)

No! I woo her with words humanistic:

"In mutual respect and freedom and with care our enjoyment does not entail injury to others, let us actuate each other's sacred potential to grow."

I may be sexy, but first of all a mystic.

"The divine vocation to be true to our own native sexual orientation, a conscious responsibility for the consequences of our relationship, the commitment to the ultimate and honest fulfillment of each other's self, the undemanding, emotionally mature and healthy giving of self in this time and place; such let our love show."

Yes, friends, happy is sex thus realistic.

(but i wonder why the ladies all say no)

October 19, 1977

ON BEING FREE: CONCLUSION TO A MEDITATION

As the animals who stalk or hide,
As the wind and sky, the sea and sand,
The rain that color-bands the sun and land,
We paid no toll to be or to abide.

Our self-put price is but a screen to hide
Our worth; the bond which others pay a band
For goddess psyche, a searing iron to brand
"Commodity" and trash our worth aside.

Self-blind we stumble in the dark;
Stark terror shrouds our nakedness in fear;
The fisted heart may be aware, but achingly.

Look to nature - all else and you! Mark
Your "are" and "able" in this now and here.
Only the truth you know can make you free.

October 27, 1977

THAT WE MIGHT KNOW

Many days drag themselves into

Years, years beyond my somewhere tomb

Marked with this epitaph: Earth Mother's womb

Absorbs and consumes her substance she gave you.

Rightly my other mother's translucent blue

Young ocean, whose warm food waters would loom

Lovingly around me, was the bloom

Of life's mid-summer point and entrance cue.

Nowhere else have I seen again the soul-

Mate of my visions, held in the hand

Of God, beheld in the world of the whole.

Oh that I might, beyond the clay and sand,

Reach the reward of Truth's Troubadour:

Envy only Love's eternal lure.

January 18, 1978

GIVING MORE THAN ALL

I do not take the offer of your soul;
The unlimited future leaves my hand unfilled -
No, empty! The liquor of love must be distilled
By droplets, not poured one overflowing whole.

I do not wish to ring the final toll
Upon the burial of all your stilled
Desire, nor promise resurrection from sealed
Tomb of love life corpse or life like mole.

If my love is death of your other loves,
I too shall die with you; a hand that shoves
Aside all hands with sledge would ring a chime.

Give but a moment, our only gift of time.
An ought makes naught of sweetness on the lip.
Each day's gift gives more than ownership.

January 26, 1978

ESPECIALLY FOR YOU

Summers come and summers go
To grow or fade in proper season.
Like summers, many women show
Their beauty, having each her reason
Why she blooms or veils her glow.
Some season their show to turn one's keys on;
Some aim to lure, or win, or know;
Of few I think their reason treason.

I treasure though our friendship-start,
Your spacious soul, your energy
And love rich lips; we are apart,
Yet each a part of poetry.

Always this regret hovers
In my heart: we are not lovers.

January 30, 1978

ONE MOMENT OF YOU CAUGHT BY THE CAMERA

The stuff that dream is made of is what you are;
A wistful look to match my wishful heart,
The yearning of my hope which is its start.
Your beauty: my soul, my earth, my sky, my star.

Oh no! Such common cliches are a spar
For frightfully meager vessels; God's own art
Has fashioned you, not a universe apart,
But comeliest and earthiest woman by far.

I envy that camera whose unlive eye
Has seen your living flesh; but pity it
Which could not, as I, long so with you to lie.

Would our desire and plan and laughter fit?
Our taste and tear, our pulse and feet keep pace?
Could I more than dream the longing in your face?

February 12, 1978

IT'S A WHOLE LOT WHEN YOU REALIZE
THAT IT COULD HAVE BEEN A LOT LESS
THAN THE LITTLE BIT IT TURNED OUT TO BE

Well I'll write you a sonnet that's truly inane;
It's pointless and meaningless and practically silly
So I'll get right to it and do it, not dilly
Or dally or shilly or shally or act uninsane.

So, Let's see now, zero in on a train
Of unthinking thoughtlessness - previously you've bought less frilly
Frothiness than this naught of illy nilly
Naughtiness, so simply accept it and don't complain.

Anyway, as I said, this is your sonnet,
A holistic naught that's fraught with nothing much
At all, a little bee to be in your bonnet,
A testimony to the fact that when you touch
Me I am touched - the which you can depend upon it.
For me than you in all there is no such.

THE END
(since that was the 14th line)

April 21, 1978

A DESIGN

You are my this-day; your love, the morn;
The days that passed were a night
Through which I traveled; home is the light
Touch of laughter on lips where joy is born.

Long ago my shame and shyness were shorn
By blades of doubt and fear; now, though I might
Fail in deeds of love, my love is right;
For right here the hope my heart has worn.

Your gift of comfort and mine of warmth are mixed
With world of arms and eyes entwined; no earth,
However song-blessed, has ecosystems so fixed.

Harmony, heart beat, handstroke, mirth,
Quietude, teasing: few facets of a love-thing.
Throughout this new Eden-day may my life sing.

March 13, 1978

MORE THAN ETERNAL VIGILANCE

I do not want to fall in love,
For she might grow to be a hag;
Life could be one great big snag,
If fox or snake plays lamb or dove.

Surely push will come to shove,
When she has got me in her bag
And Lady Godiva becomes the nag;
"No love!" I swear to heaven above.

Self interest keeps my interest low
When red-lipped gals would make me blue.
I'm safe and sure; so, pals, I warn you:
"Beware when girls their wares bestow."

"Oh hi, Kathy. Yes, dinner, show...."
What have I got myself into?

March 23, 1978

ATONEMENT

Cowarding in the bed of my fear,
Cuddling close to my angry love,
Cherishing the intimate, familiar tear,
Charging my vengeance for forces that shove:

Such have I been in morning hours,
Resisting the rising warmth of light
That pervades the day; while Ego devours
My promise with perennial night.

My poison was but mine; my pain,
My thought that I was pained; foul fate
Was self huddling from Fortune-rain.

If there be no inexorable God-hate
As my lie would have, I now maintain
Innocent wealth and a loving soul-mate.

October 18, 1978

AT THE SAGE EXPERIENCE

Into Your arms, the abyss of Your being,
I fell, feeling the utter emptiness
Of eternal space. The happiness
I longed for was beyond all my seeing.

Hollow indeed was that vacant, fleeing
Nature I had known; more hollowness,
It seemed, to experience Your holiness.
Was nothingness, vacancy, the whole of being?

Surely if I let go the substance I knew,
Admittedly weighted, crushing, sadsome thing,
I'd be forever stilled where no love-wind blew.

Yet Your inward voice came and comes to bring
This pledge: "From nothing I created you;
From this nothing each new gift shall spring."

March 1, 1979

REFLECTION ON SOLOMON'S SONG

We were pursued through channel of our lust

By this belief; motion of the flesh

Need war against the spirit, waging fresh

Foul conflict against the Christian trust.

For sure the body is earth-stench; we must

In guilt, with fear and trembling, break the mesh

Of God's libidinal gift; for He shall thresh

Our thought to winnow faulting soul like dust.

The eye may see, the ear may hear, our thirst

And hunger fair food and drink may find.

So why one surging thrust so singly cursed?

In the canticle of love He sings to mankind

He woos our soul with blatant, sexual outburst.

Is our sex force where the Master His masterwork signed?

March 7, 1979

THE SUREST WAY TO SUICIDE?

Kill your brother! God gave most
To Abel's kin when He marked Cain
So none would kill him; Cain was host
To Abel's peace by self-sought bane.

Your story of your brother's wrong
Is the greater wrong; you carry
His war and sin in your heart and song,
Thus to his guilt your pride you marry.

So let the Cains go forgiven
From your sight; then is driven
Far from you your self-told curse.

Your time is now; do not rehearse
The past or future. Be self-shriven;
You have God's present time to live in.

March 27, 1979

LIFE SONNET

A song across the space of nowhere-place,
Marked off by unlimited love. We know
This year, time which we have to show
Ourselves the shawl we weave of living lace.

There! Upon the Mind! We need erase
The traces of our misbelief that slow
The growth of life. The pain is: not to blow
The gale of truth, our unity in grace.

A song within the soul, beyond the sight
Of body-eye, so caught by sightful strong.
Come sing with me; sing of life and light.

Carole of my careless heart, song
Of me and song from me: All-Being bright,
I sing the love to which we all belong.

April 8, 1979

TOWARDS TRUE VISION

How long ago a party began my year;
No longer is any to be my beginning;
No matter what the spiralling, spinning
Swirl of change, I am fully now, wholly here.

How long ago my coward heart was ruled by fear;
No longer is innocence for mercy grinning,
For night is not time for losing or winning,
Only for firmity till day appear.

I watched till night-end and found the watch
Was sole defense against the promised dawn;
My Eastern sky breaks now with radiant swatch.

The Godly Groom illumines my world like fawn
Of dappled coat. No fuss for random blotch!
Shadows but prove Light's universal spawn.

May 14, 1979

THE SCENTFUL SCENT

In first morning the city has a lot
Of special smells, all of which stink.
You try not to sniff and naturally think
How appropriate is each pigeon blot.

Later when folk fill up every spot
And trample toe with a prolonged blink,
The early odors into a sight-bath sink.
Might dawn's memory be nostalgic? Likely not!

Noon finds me, at lest, feasting on scent
Of baked good, flower and, ahh, feminine air;
Just for me their gift of passage was meant.

Later the hour and more do alert eyes stare,
Follow nose and lead feet. I won't repent;
I'm willingly caught in perfume's guileful lair.

June 6, 1979

SOME NOTES ON THE SONNETS

Not all of my sonnets are included. The very worst are omitted out of respect for the reader. Others must wait for another collection.

I do not believe a writer ought instruct the reader in how to read what is offered. It becomes a gift to the reader whose reading brings new meaning to the words, otherwise they are meaningless.

These notes are only a way of sharing the experience that gave rise to some sonnet or a technical point. Their special meaning for me, that which was there when they were written and that which arose when they were reread, are secondary to your meanings which they must now serve or be of no value.

Page 7. It was an especially appropriate day for people to be nasty to us public servants for no reason at all. For some reason we humans think we always need an excuse to be nasty. Maybe we can simply be honestly nasty: do it for no excuse at all!

Page 8. The last line is best read with decidedly measured boldness. The intent was to have a series of spondees: measures of two accented syllables. Actually, good poetry has some multi-syllable words in each line.

Page 10, 11. When I read that remarkable surrender to modern sexual sophistry in preference to the Evangelical Counsels, I could only think of it all as another come-on for random mating. I assumed any mature woman would see through such a ploy. But one gal read the sonnet and said she would go for that line!

A technical note. The classical Petrarchan sonnet is fourteen lines but allows an occasional extra syllable or foot. So there are only fourteen lines!

Page 12. Early one morning, after a marvelous rain storm, I had to drive to the Central Valley on business. The first thing the sun did upon rising was take the opportunity to make rainbows. My soul had been in a storm also, and dawn came.

Page 13. There are times when one writes poetry for no other reason than one cannot say in plain words the thoughts and feelings filling the heart. In this case, if I had known any other way in which to say what needed to be said, I would have done so. Maybe I have not finished listening and so cannot speak plainly.

Page 16. There was a photo of a nude lady huddled with her knees to her breast. I wrote this poem and typed it in white correction paper onto the black background of the photo. Comments of those who saw it included a child's assessment: "She looks like an orphan." And a lady's: "She is not good enough for the poem."

Page 22. The sonnet is not talking merely about the physical sexual urge. Otherwise we have bought into the unstated values of the new sexual ethics. In the study of handwriting analysis we often see people with much sexual activity who are erotically frustrated and unfulfilled. Then others with no physical activity are libidinally fulfilled and free. Interesting paradox.

Page 23. I had too many lines. So I made the first line the title. The second line, the answer to the title question, became the first line.

Page 24. The title sonnet. Comments for page 13 apply here. Maybe, though, the only redeeming feature is the title.

Page 25. Years ago I wrote a free verse poem about the New Year. This sonnet alludes to the romantic notion of that earlier poem that someone will fulfill one's dreams. Romantic notions are lovely, and they ought not be slaughtered. They merely need be balanced with the realization that the greatest romance is that of giving and growing in a life of mutual values. That can be one or more of many mutualities, as spouse/spouse, parent/child, sibling/sibling, citizen/citizen, believer/believer.

Page 26. The city in question is Oakland. If it were San Francisco, the words "the city" would be capitalized. I had arrived at the Oakland Greyhound depot after a night trip back from somewhere. The first four lines are a realistic description of that morning. The other lines are a romantic creation.

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THE NEW SHOW

My melancholy melts to mellowness;
The drama of my life has closed for lack
Of grand applause; front row dozed and back
Threw penny and peanut making my stage a mess.

Light out; final curtain; not for lease;
Never under a new management;
Closed for good; the show not sent
On the road; all extras on release.

What do I do now? Apply for a bit part
In some other show? Carry on
The act where they support this dying art?

No thanks. I'll not choose misery upon
Another's term. As God's new jester I start;
His comic comedy was all of life that's gone.

June 1979

ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

"Wound me, O Lord," we prayed.

Might as well ask for it,

We figured, since we would get

It anyway - that is if we stayed.

Then again, where could we go

To escape a God so intent

On zapping us; but He meant

It for our good; the catechist said so.

I mean, it only appeared the Lord

Was a mean bastard, a bully;

Our Father just seemed to be unruly.

So if our faith disappeared, the Lord

Also does not believe He's like that;

We plopped down, He didn't knock us on our . . .

I mean knock us flat.

July 17, 1979

REGARDING ESOTERIC KNOWLEDGE

Oh God, I know all of that, all of it;
The divine nature of man, your child,
The marvelous pinnacle of your creative success.
Yet deep within and through me is this rending split.

Oh God, I know your firmness in me; but the brittle
shards of my fractured self, the horrid wild
Remnant of my personal promise, these press
Constantly, and against me is a damning writ.

Knowing better than all this worsens, not helps;
Realizing these are illusions merely embitters
My caught being, and I could easily die.

What is the divine chemical which melts
The sharp stone that chokes me, the fire for the litter
Of my life, the ultimate comfort for this weeping I?

November 2, 1979

FROM THE SONG OF SONGS: SONNET I

You Tease! You teased me with a little kiss.

Oh cover me with kisses of your mouth;

Drunken me with light-full love. My drouth

For your love-liquor yearns without remiss.

Your skin, your hair: delicious, delicate perfume;

Massage me wholly with your love words;

Your name the choicest oil to rub me towards

Deliria: My king of this love-room

No wonder women love you so, desire

To follow you. To feel your glad embrace

Makes one think cold another's fiercest fire.

Only your kisses filling my mouth can give

Me words enough to sing your praise. What grace:

To know it is right to love you as to live.

March 13, 1980

FROM THE SONG OF SONGS: SONNET II

These other women envy me my love-friend;
Why else they mock my umber skin and hard
Toned body? My brothers made me work and guard
Their sun-filled vineyard; mine I failed to tend.

Look away, you women. I am black
And roughened, a country girl, yet beautiful;
He loves me most. I won't be gullible
For jewel, perfume or trapping, as if I lack.

What concern would I have but for whom I long?
Where does he lead his flock? So I may follow.
Where does he rest at noon? There I belong.

So cease your envy, women; help fill my hollow
Heart and find me the sweetheart of my song.
His breast will shelter me as a nest the swallow.

March 14, 1980

SONNET THIRTY-SIX

All at once in the night, here is the one I love;
In the every night of lonely tear there comes
The revealing surprise of you, My Love. How hums
The soft melody which will fuse my heart with yours.

And how thrilling to know the truth, which bores
In so deeply my mind, will fill your mind
With assurance I too am he you find
The one only you love. I'm yours, I'm yours. Be mine.

Ah so softly to feel your pleasant, warm touch, fine
To the hunger my flesh sore harbors for you; this night
Is the night when you come to stay, to be: full right!

In the simple existence life can give such one
As me, see, Fair My Love, behold and know such of
A true miracle: Faithful I am in trial or fun.

March 29, 1980

THE ETERNAL CHILD

A child is formed by God and needs no shape
By us; a child accepts as simple fact
Adults around; a child is not an act;
A child comes to us with no plan of escape.

Willing to be little; eager thrust
To boundless growth; guileless wisdom shown
In eyes of open vision; searching the unknown;
Our sinless model; our imitator in trust.

Such is a child; such were we in long
Since youth, wherein we lost our naive care
Of simple need and sense that we belong.

We lost ourselves by stripping innocence bare;
The Master restores our faith, sound, strong.
A Child enters heaven leading the rest of us there.

April 23, 1980

MY CHOICE

The soft, gentle curl of your arm;
The warmth, womanness of your breast;
In these have I found long sought rest,
With these have you cured all my harm.

The light melody of your voice;
Your breath with the beat of your heart;
Such songs echo Erato's art
To haunt me and make me rejoice.

In you scent of love leads my lust
To hunt Nature's solemn require,
To catch you, my quarry, and be caught.

I see - Oh I see! - how robust,
How so passionate you are; me bemire,
Till all carnal truth I am taught.

May 20, 1980

WHAT DOES THIS POEM MEAN

These sounds are merely echoes which I found
Reverberating, always pulsing in
The concert hall of my soul, convulsing in
A rhythmic, witching, calling, insistent sound.

Counterbeating faint, resisting still,
Attempting freedom apart from such a song,
My heart fought that which it sought so long;
Surrendering not, it forgot such "not" my sole ill.

Loose me, Lord! Cut the strand I bound my heart
To stand, to hang, to languish so far apart
From that so close, so fated crescendo within me.

You know the sadly silent corner I hide me;
Blast your symphonic insistence loudly here!
Resistless, I echo your music sound, clear.

July 1, 1980

TO MARY WHOM I HAVE NOT MET

I do not know who you are or what;
I do not find an image of your face
In memory; nor a longing heart
Do I carry for your presence here.

No need, no emptiness has cut
My hour alone, unravelling the lace
Thought weaves in solitude; so apart
We are, prospect of loss brings no fear.

What then is this enticement I find
For you filtering subtly through my mind,
Converse allure of Circe ennobling desire?

Gently yet, an unconsuming, lightsome fire
Burns in my spirit-hearth and I am content.
Come, Mary, or not, in choice as heaven meant.

July 23, 1980

A MIRACLE

It happened in the night, before the dawn
 Rescued our eyes from darkness, before the day
 Recycled our lives into striving, delay
And hurried chase through money's continual spawn.

It happened in our inattention of sleep,
 In the forgetful slumber, in Solitude's
 Search for loss, in our lonesome broods
Of empty dream where we void to laugh or weep.

I flew to you - I sped through the vortexed air,
 Into the allure of your arm, to grasp, to hold
 The meetness of you, to kiss the real of you.
 It was I, that miracle. How vivid, true;
 How wondrous that I should be so sure, so bold!
No hesitancy, nor compulsion, to be in your there.

July 29, 1980

THE REUNION

Return to home, my son, and give to me
The comfort of your arms, arms to hold
A weakened father, arms that reach out bold
To care our homestead, arms full strong to work.

But turn your gaze to conscience where there lurk
The reasons heart yearns toward this plain, to come
To haste, to be beside us. Hear the drum-
Ming of my blood within you, hear my plea.

We turn, so many times we turn to see
Your unappearing form approach the gate
Then run to meet our longing, yet unfilled.

The letter, like so many, lay unsealed
In the dead mail room; the fire its fate.
A stranger lies cremated by the sea.

September 1980

IN HONOR OF

Sometime my mind wanders away from me
And searches the universe for your being;
Such time my eye is at a loss, no seeing
How I might find you, that you really be.

Sometime in somnolence I fiercely fling
Aside coverlet of loneliness, fleeing
My bed of resignation, disagreeing
With fated pain that to my heart would cling.

To all gods of love on bended knee
I pray, beseech and beg your grace-filled vision;
Yet straining mind and eye yearn hopelessly.

Despairing to wrest of heaven's fist this valued thing,
I compose my soul, sustaining want's derision.
From quietude your presence seems to spring.

December 28, 1980

UPON A LOSS

The message tore through my heart and I wail
The loss of that which was never mine;
A beam of your love, too timid to shine
full force, was a glimpse of heaven in my hell.

The news of this unwelcomed farewell
Brings wish that your loss, in the loveless shrine
Of an old man's greed, is much less than mine,
That miracles change into heaven your hell.

The conviction that such prayer be true
Is as hollow as was my fleeting hope,
Is as empty as my home once graced by you.

I turn from temptation to sadly grope,
Complain and coast despondently my life through;
Love's height is gained by the upward slope.

December 31, 1980

IN APOLOGY

I wrote you an only poem - of hate -
 Despised my fear not to show
 Injured expect nor simply go.
Now ends that rancorous debate.

You wrote me nothing, only spoke
 Acceptable deceit, painfully wondered
 Of my mind-change, change which sundered
Us apart - a keen bladed stroke.

In a fancied other we blind-believed;
 The sun rose, set so often on
Our kind-full pretence; who was deceived
 But we that love long since had gone?

Memory no longer is self-grieved;
 Forgiveness is the final antiphon.

January 18-20, 1981

SIMPLICITY'S GIFT

I have often wondered of this thing;
So often the awe of it will confound
My voluminous words, cutting their sound
Till I stay mute, a bell without a ring.

The simple marvel that such could be
Never escapes me; rooted in the ground
Of my private Eden, fruitful beyond bound
Of expectation, it is - abidingly.

If I look away awhile, fearfully
I glance again lest it might quickly wing
Away, sense my apprehension and so flee.

Nothing brought it at first; none can bring
It back, this you-gift which my anxieties hound.
How the quiet, the presence of you astound.

January 21, 1981

THE HUNT IS ON

At this juncture in my life, I catch sight
Of my tail as I doggedly chase myself in flight
Around a corner; I flee but not fast enough,
For there I meet me. As a bloodhound I'm tough.

Anyway, I try hard to get away from me,
But harder to run to ground or up a tree.
On occasions like this a man shows his stuff:
Will to persist, strong to run, clever to bluff.

Yes, I'd easily say as a fox I'm very bright,
As a hound dogged, as a composite quite
Remarkable; though duality is rough.

It's hard on me not getting together, to be
Never exactly where I am day or night.
Help me! Did I just scurry to left or right?

Late January 1981

AT A POETRY READING

The arrogance of uncrafted work made leaden
The air around our minds, while the smell
Of uncovered, long dead self-sacrifice swel-
Tered from parental tomb which ego fed in.

The moderator kindly mitigated
The oblique angle of her nose, proclaimed
This not only poetic by named
It centurial great. Then nose reelevated.

The crowd cowered before the accusation
Of its guilt for Jonestown, letting the cello
Lay pall upon its happy expectation.

Luckily a break - for our escape. Our "Hello"
Not half as heart-felt as "Good-bye and thanks."
Artifice outranks all art for swank.

February 16, 1981

THE NIGHT OF DARKNESS

The night flies on, not knowing we are here.

The night knows nothing, even its own star.

The day is hiding, shy behind the bar
Of moonbeam, shy and slow to appear.

Dreams drift past, dreamy gossamer

Veil behind which illusions entice our heart,
Beguile our heart, bewitch, beguile, give start
And startle the unsuspecting heart - and bestir.

Awake! Awake the nearly befuddling war
Of feeling and thought. Jars complacent demur
This burr of contradiction, making smart
The settled heart, wresting what is held dear.

Let all dissolve to nothing; all let loose.

Of only the void in you shall love have use.

July 13, 1981

WITH YOU

Do not fear that I shall leave you
An autumn fan; through many a year
God witness my devotion: true
And lasting in both joy and tear.

This pledge I give is of this time;
Yet this time is timeless, Dear,
Embracing ages, to make a crime
To count an instant past the here.

Was not my past dissolved, enclosed
Within your presence? Are there things
Remaining to your love opposed?

So if to all that's gone your now brings
End and former vows have finally dozed,
In this with you my future springs.

July 15, 1981

AFTER AWHILE

What does it take to write a poem, you ask.

Some words of music: echo, contrast, rhyme;

Then rhythm or cadence, giving proper time.

With your request, it is an easy task.

For my ear, your mouth of words a flask

To drink full inspiration; your voice a chime

To set the tome; your motions rhythm I'm

In need of; your delight the fame in which I'll bask.

Hear the verse I offer; if it fail,

Correct me and the fault I shall correct.

If it serve, reward me with the tale.

What favored work! At your bid, collect

Your precious wonders and on them fully dwell.

But how such lines, like yours, could I perfect?

January 28, 1982

A NIGHT ALONE

In early morning, loneliness will press
My waking heart, compressing it with long-
Ing for your touch; a wordless, tuneless song
Will speak of growing want without redress.

The wildness, mildness of my want caress
My calm, suppress my peace; and I belong
To need - need not right, need not wrong.
. . . and I am more; and I am less.

Come, I cry to unlistening you. Come!
Stay, I pray to unknowing you. Stay!
Surely, for you better than me be some-
Thing, someone, somewhere. Yet I say:

My best, devoted best I would become.
Would that this night alone become your day!

February 19, 1982

MUTE

The desert of my poetry surrounds
My heart and speaking: dry, starved, choked with dust
Of worthless words and grit of self-disgust;
No oases give this desert bound.

Other than the dead I catch no sound
To which inarticulate heart can trust
Its prisoned yearning; I so useless thrust
Against the arid air and hostile ground.

No hunger, however heroic, may
Force heartless fate to grant heartfelt gift,
Grasp inspiration off an empty tray.

What matter ever, rich or poor, uplift
The soul, full nourished but in heaven's fair say.
Tongue, stay mute! Truth is not revealed in drift

August 10, 1987

NOTES

NOTES ON THE SONNETS

These notes are only meant to share some fact behind a sonnet or a technical point of poetics.

Page 9. This attempts to express the experience of utter emptiness when one's worth has oneself alone as its source. It was written during a dark night experience. If I had measured up to the full gift of that experience, I would have known the Divine Day. Unfortunately, I did not.

Page 10. This verse is based on the *SONGS OF SONGS* 1:1-4, the following on 1:5-8. The unfulfilled intent had been to write a series of sonnets for the entire text. I believe the *SONGS OF SONGS* comprises the finest poetry, certainly the noblest yet most passionate of love poems. And genuine love, for the Bride and Bridegroom desire only each other and have contempt for all the enticements the world offers. It is the image of God's love for his people and the love He asks of his people. It is the love we should have for each other. The fashions, glamour, promises and pandering of today's commercialism should tempt us no more than the Bride was by Solomon's luxuries and honors.

A friend said the *SONNET I* had too many words, so I made a free verse version which follows.

FROM THE SONG OF SONGS: FREE VERSE I

Ah! Kiss me with the kisses of your mouth;
Drunken me with your light-full love.
The delicate, delicious perfume
Of your skin and hair fill me with fragrances.
Your name is not pronounced, it pours like an oil
With which the maidens desire to be massaged.
Though a king bring me to rule in his house,
You are my joy; you are my merriment.
Drunken we with your love-wine;
One taste tells me how right it is!

Page 12. I set down a rhyme scheme of ABBC, CDDE, EFF, GAG. Then a rhythmic pattern, which is called a scansion, was set as xx'/xx'/x'/x'/. The x's indicate unaccented syllables and the apostrophes accented ones. The slashes separate the feet, that is groups of syllables. Then I wrote the sonnet. The scansion did not come out exactly perfect, but I really like this sonnet for its unique musicalness.

Page 13. After I wrote this I learned that two friends had written poems with the same title. Theirs were more personal and brought forth beauty from a childhood anguish. God creates children but not mistakes. The child's inheritance of sin is the sin we bring into the child's life. As Christ said, the child is the stuff of which Heaven's Kingdom is made.

Page 14. The intended scansion for this poem was x'/'x'/xx'. Line ten is the only perfect adherence to the scansion. Most lines have x'/xx'/xx' with other variations.

Page 15. This sonnet is a milder version of *REGARDING ESOTERIC KNOWLEDGE*, both in expression and the intensity of the experience from which it came. I enjoy reading it aloud as if a full orchestra were backing me up with a Beethoven symphony. The final line repeats a theme you will see in other sonnets. Indeed, you will find some themes and expressions returning in several sonnets. That is because I tend to be dumb at times and must learn the same lesson in several forms.

Page 16. I got tired of people insisting God chose their mates/lovers. I guess that way, when we have the fruit of our poor choices or inadequate commitments, we can also blame God for the mess we made.

Page 17. A mystery is that which I do not understand, whether by lack of appropriate knowledge or because of insufficient consideration. A miracle is a mystery in action. This sonnet was written after an out-of-body experience.

Page 18. Like several others in this collection this is not truly a sonnet. Fourteen lines is the physical count; the proper development of the theme with the last line being a kind of aphorism is more important.

Page 29. This was the fifty-fourth and last sonnet I wrote. There were twenty-two in the first volume issued last year and twenty-three in this one. The sonnets left out were either exceptionally horrendous poetry or too personal for printing. I have made peace with the fact that the talent for writing poetry remains but remains inactive. Other things now require the creative attention and energy consumed previously by the poetry. I highly recommend the study of versification and the discipline of crafted poetry. It teaches one precision of expression and humility. Reading the psalms or the greatest names in English poetry, one realizes how modest one's own efforts actually were. Yet the experiencing of an aspect of one's own soul remains ever an enriching gift.